197 in the neighboring Sudan, for Muslim traders even today mix more Arabic loanwords into their Amharic than do Amharas. Areas conquered by slightly islamized Galla and held from the 16th to the 19th centuries were affected to varying degrees by several Galla (Cushitic) dialects.

196 Semantic drift is now in the direction of the Amharic speech pattern of Shoa province, which replaces the dominance of former aristocratic Gondar, thus introducing many more Galla traits into the language. This change is concomitant with the increasing political [191] dominance and centralization of the Shoan dynasty and power. Proclamations emanate from Addis Ababa in Shoan Amharic, and schoolchildren are increasingly taught this "standard" Amharic. Old terms of other provinces are often falling into disuse.

Sometimes this process is conscious, particularly in matters of national pride. Thus, the old word "tugul" for the primitive, round, thatched, wattle-and-mud hut, is now replaced, through influence directed from Addis Ababa, by "sar byet" (lit. thatched house), considered more polite, for it denotes a house not yet covered by a corrugated iron roof, without the connotation of the mud walls; or, for similar reasons, by "goja" (lit. simple residence).

The use of the call "Gurage" for laborer has been expressly forbidden, because it is now considered insulting to that hardworking ethnic group, and the call "coolie" has been purposely imported. Furthermore, increased use is made in Shoan Amharic of Geez abstracts for modern purposes, such as the suffix "nät", which can be attached [178] to any Amharic verb to render it into an abstraction. Modernization, which has recently introduced such new cultural phenomena into Addis Ababa as the adult, unmarried "Miss", has, within the past decade, amended an old term to describe the new phenomenon: the old "wo/zäro" (married, noble lady; Mrs.) is amended to the new concept "wo/zarit" (adult though unmarried Miss). This term is still unknown in the rural

196 Amhara provinces, but is entering through the provincial capitals, such as Gondar, at the present time. Semantic drift can be traced along these lines.

d) Literature; Special Argots.

538 The religious character of most of the traditional Amharic-Geez literature has already been described in connection with the church.

Some of the material of liturgy finds its way into lay usage. Rhymes, "qetem", originally composed for devotional poetry, have long found their way to chants of praise sung to warlords, feudal nobles, the king, and by extension, philosophic-sentimental poetry in general.

Folk literature, which is oral, contains numerous stories resembling Aesop's fables, in which witty repartee among or with animals is featured (Footnote 89).

538 Individual poets and other authors, if they existed in number, 522 have largely been forgotten, because of the cultural prohibition against writing down any but sacred matter, and the restricted literacy. But a fortunate exception exists in the person of an Amhara wit named Aläqa (lit. chief, an honorific title) Gäbre-Hanna, who was a contemporary of Emperor Menelik II in the late 19th century. (Footnote 90) He, too, apparently did not write down any of his many witticisms, but since he lived fairly recently, commuting between his home in Gondar and the then incipient city of Addis Ababa, he is still popularly as well as officially identified with his stories in both localities, and some of the anecdotes even tie his person to historical events.

Footnote 89 - Courlander & Leslau: The Fire on the Mountain, 1950

Footnote 90 - Messing, S. D.: Ethiopian Folktales ascribed to the 19th Century Wit, Aläqa Gäbre-Hanna. (in) Journal of American Folklore, Jan - March 1957, pp. 69-72.

201 675 196 Symbolism in commerce serves to give legal validity to a trade agreement, since bystanders thus become witnesses. When buyer and seller agree, the right hands are waved up and down, which attracts attention, then palm touches on palm (with fingers stretched away). This may or may not be reinforced by the verbal oath "Hayle Selassye yemut" (May the emperor die, if I lie). This commercial symbolism is followed especially in important transactions, such as livestock.

201 196 Symbolism in political life takes the form of rythmic handclapping, ("anchchätächchächä"), not to be confused with Western applause. It is performed as a greeting, as acknowledgement of superordination. It does not follow public proclamation. These are greeted with respectful silence, but women may indicate actual or pretended joy with their joyshout "ellel". Amhara public opinion ("astäyayät") sometimes signals negative reaction to official proclamations by "murmuring" in a delayed stage-whisper, and though officialdom traditionally pretends to ignore public opinion, it usually employs paid listeners who mix with the public to trace any "murmuring" to its sources. For, in the past, ignored murmurings frequently led to rebellions.

Anger, whether silent or accompanying verbal battles, is signalled by wide opening of the eyes ("afättätä"), or a furious, intent stare ("täfattätä").

201 Directional signs are made by moving eyelids and eyelashes, particularly by nobles or persons imitating their subtle ways. To communicate "get rid of this person", I want to talk to you alone", the eyelids wink up and down ("taqqäsä"); to signal "come out of the hut, I want to talk to you outside", the pupils and eyelashes work in the direction of the door. Men may give such signals as frequently as women.

201 177 The signal of expressing desire to enter consists of knocking with the entire fist ("korakkomä" - onomatopoetic). Finger-knocking

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[For information on the "wax and gold" poetic formula, see categories 19, 195 and 538.]

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

5 / *Tradition and Modernization*

THE GENIUS OF AMHARA CULTURE

The Amhara as a whole are not much given to aesthetic concerns. They are practical-minded peasants, austere religionists, and spirited warriors. Their interests and achievements as a nation are chiefly in the spheres of military activity and government. And yet, if we seek some theme with which to gain an entree into the spirit of their society and culture, we will do well to attend to the sphere of poetry. For it is a poetic phenomenon—that represented by the title of this book—which constitutes both a key to the genius of Amhara culture and a highly distinctive Amhara contribution to Ethiopian culture.

Sam-ennā warq ("wax and gold") is the formula used by the Amhara to symbolize their favorite form of verse. It is a form built of two semantic layers. The apparent, figurative meaning of the words is called "wax"; their more or less hidden actual significance is the "gold."

In its generic sense, the expression *sam-ennā warq* refers to a number of poetic figures which embody this twofold meaning. The use of such figures distinguishes the Amhara equivalent of true poetry from ordinary verse, in which everyday language is merely embellished with rhyme and rhythm. In the genre known as *qenē*, the original and more elegant kind of *sam-ennā warq* poetry, the lines are composed in Ge'ez and depend primarily on religious symbolism. But *sam-ennā warq* constructions also appear in some types of secular verse in the vernacular Amharic and, indeed, at times inform Amharic conversation.

Masters of the art of *qenē* composition have analyzed these poetic figures into about a dozen different types.[4] *Sam-ennā warq* in its more specific sense refers to one of these types of figures—the prototype of them all. It consists of an explicit comparison in which the subjects being compared—the wax and gold—are presented in apposition, while their predicates are rendered jointly by a single verb which carries both a wax and a gold meaning. (This terminology is derived from the work of the goldsmith, who constructs a clay mold around a form created in wax and then, draining the wax, pours the molten gold into that form.) So, for example, if the poet's aim is to praise a hero like Emperor Menelik, he creates a wax model, like "the lion," in terms of whose actions the gold, Menelik, is depicted: "The lion Menelik crushed the wolf Italy."[5]

Keeping this dual imagery consistent throughout the stanza is a primary rule of wax-and-gold composition. A poet who mixes his metaphors is sometimes rebuked with the epithet "hermaphrodite." The following example presents an Amharic couplet which properly embodies the *sam-ennā warq* figure:

Etsa balas bolto addām kanfareshe
Madhānē alam lebē tasaqala-leshe.

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

demonstrate some affiliation with the Solomonic line; the marriage of one of these into a local dynasty contributed an added buttress to its traditionalist claims. The other was what seems to be a still more deeply rooted disposition for decentralized hegemony based on the ancient character of the society. For, as Cerulli has recently suggested, the origins of the Ethiopian state were such as to lay the foundation for a persisting order of feudalism. The movement of South Arabs to the Eritrean coast and highlands took place, not through the conquest of an indigenous population by a united invader, as in the Norman Conquest of England, but by the intermittent emigration and settlement of distinct tribes from South Arabia into various parts of the African territory. Thus, Cerulli concludes, we see in Ethiopia "a feudalism expanded from the roots: a number of principalities or peoples which, independent on African land after their emigration, have finally been regrouped in a higher political unity, yet still conserving in the feudal system thus constituted part of their autonomy and their individuality."[37] If this is so, it would constitute an added traditional element in the sense of legitimacy of local dynastic interests.

All this suggests that we must look to two sources for the prestige of the *makuännent*—that recruitment into the secular elite came from "below" as well as from "above." These two bases of noble status are indicated by the etymology of two Amharic words commonly applied to the local nobility, *shum* and *bälläbbät*. *Shum* (or *seyum*) comes from a root which means to invest with high position. The emperor, as we have seen, is *seyuma egziäbhër* ("invested by God") and he in turn is the source of authority for investing other dignitaries. The status associated with the word *shum* is therefore based on the act of investiture by a sovereign. *Bälläbbät*, on the other hand, has the literal meaning, "one who has a father"; in other words, one who has a significant father, a notable ancestry. This status refers to claims to deference which are based on birth.

Claims based on birth, moreover, were closely tied to the ownership of land and supported by local territorial allegiances. This appears most strikingly in the office of *çhïqä shum*, the lowest level official, who is appointed, to be sure, but by the local people themselves from a small number of *bälläbbät* whose eligibility for the office rests on their inheritance of rights to certain specified pieces of land. Other local offices, like *malkañña* and *meslanë*, were normally given by regional governors to *bälläbbät* indigenous to the area. The sacred sentiment of fealty to a monarch, whose charisma rested both on membership in a hallowed dynasty and the hallowed act of coronation, thus competed in Abyssinian souls with deeply felt sentiments of attachment to members of noted families who symbolized local rights and traditions. Abyssinian political structure at any given time was determined by the relative strength of the forces supported by these two principles of legitimacy.

Neither principle was ever realized in pure form. No matter how great his

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

Amharic proverb, and even the Emperor when visiting a school expects students to remain seated if they are at the dining table when he arrives.

Some indication of the comparative significance of this concern about eating and drinking in the Amhara psyche is afforded by a recent cross-cultural investigation of dreams. Obtained from samples of young male respondents in Ethiopia, Nigeria, and the United States, the dreams were evaluated with respect to the presence or absence of themes of "manifest orality": scenes of someone desiring, looking for, or consuming food or drink. The proportion of Ethiopian respondents (mostly Orthodox Amhara from the Gondar area) who revealed manifest orality in their dreams was found to be *64 per cent.* By contrast, the proportion of those in a sample of non-Muslim Nigerians whose dreams showed manifest orality was 38 per cent, and that in the sample of Americans was only 22 per cent.[11]

The Amhara custom of giving *gurshā* plays up the erotic component of eating. *Gurshā* means "mouthful" and, as already noted, refers to a wad of food which one places in another's mouth, usually as a gesture of affection. *Gurshā* are exchanged between husband and wife and among relatives and friends. They are often given to children, especially in families of higher status, and to favored servants and retainers as well. The *gurshā* is of such meaning in Amhara experience that it is referred to in a number of Amharic idioms. First of all it means a present or a tip—literally, *pourmanger*. It also refers to the charge of a gun: the gun is a beloved object, and a *gurshā* is what one places in its mouth. In contemporary usage, it refers to flashlight batteries.

In connection with love and many other subjects, a good deal of the imagery of Amharic verse relates in one way or another to eating and drinking. The following sample of proverbs and couplets may convey some of the flavor of this phenomenon:

*Ṭajj** has no specks; a poor man has no friends.

• • •

[Use] proverbs in conversation; [drink] *ṭajj* in a carafe.

• • •

Hand and fly-whisk; mouth and *ïnjarā*† [go together].

• • •

No matter how much one plows, nothing tastes so good as *goman*.‡

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* *Ṭajj*, it may be remembered, is the Ethiopian wine made of honey.

† *Ïnjarā* is the staple pancake.

‡ *Goman* is a kind of cabbage plant that requires no plow cultivation.

12:Young E-4,5 (1966) 1971 MP5 Amhara MP5
Begemder

*753 causes a secondary ailment by lacerating the victim's heart, equally often no specific pathogenic mechanism is specified for the prodrome.

TAXONOMY AND ETIOLOGY

*753 *192 • 196 [121] A "disease name", to use Frake's definition, is a minimal, meaningful answer to the question, "What is the name of the illness?", in Amharic, "Basiyta simmu min yibbaalaal?". If none of the linguistic components of a description of an illness can by itself describe that ailment (basiyta), then the entire description is a disease name, and labels a single diagnositc category. Not all episodes of illness can be diagnosed by a single disease name, of course, since distinguishable ailments may co-occur, or one may be a prodrome of another (Frake 1961:126).

Disease names thus differ from designations of kinds of symptoms, although the names of certain symtpoms are also used to denote specific ailments. For example, "bird" refers to "chills", but "yibird basiyta" (lit., "the chill disease") refers specifically to "malaria". The same is generally true regarding the use of the names of pathogenic agents. For example, the literal meaning of "yibariya basiyta" is the "ganel's disease" ("bariya", meaning slave, is often used as a euphemism for "ganel");

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in practice, it is used to denote only "epilepsy", one of the several ailments with which the ganel is associated.

Each disease name has, as its diagnostic criteria, perceptible symptoms and a particular etiological context. Etiological information includes the agents, acts, environmental circumstances, substances, and physiological processes which explain the onset of the symptoms. Two disease names contrast if only one is said to diagnose correctly a particular set of symptoms in a specific etiological context. Two contrasting disease names can, then, refer to the same set of symptoms, if at the same time each denotes a different etiological context. For example, the ailments referred to as "migaña" and "kureyña", are characterized by a common set of symptoms (sustained, acute pain in the lower abdomen). The ailments are distinguished etiologically, however, according to different causal agents (non-zar versus zar) and environmental circumstances.

Sometimes, more than one disease name is considered equally appropriate for the same set of symptoms in the same etiological context. Frake (1961:117) suggests that two explanations are possible for this. First, the disease names may be referential synonyms, and mutually inclusive. For example, they may be dialect variants or variants appropriate to different kinds of

12:Young E-4,5 (1966) 1971 MP5 Amhara MP5
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discourse. Thus, leprosy is properly referred to as "kontina". This term is rarely used by many women, however; to do so, they believe, exposes the speaker to leprosy in some unknown way. Instead, the ailment is referred to as "yimimat basiyta" ("the disease that takes the skin off").

The second possibility is that the terms are located at different levels of a taxonomic hierarchy. Along the vertical dimension, the Amhara disease-name taxonomy employs only three successive levels of specificity. At the most general level, all human disease names are subsumed by the term "basiyta". At the next level, ailments are divided into "serious" and "non-serious" varieties. Serious ("kobode": "weighty", or "hayleña": "powerful") diseases includes those which are potentially mortal, or severely and usually permanently debilitating, or grossly disfiguring. The third taxonomic level is that of greatest specificity, at which ninety-two disease names were recorded. A minor exception at this level is the use, by some informants, of the term "fantata" to subsume three, contrasting named poxes.

In terms of linguistic criteria, then, the Amhara disease-name taxonomy is relatively simple. When observed from a therapeutic perspective, however, an additional level of discrimination, based on etiological criteria, can be discerned.

12:Young E-4,5 (1966) 1971 MP5 Amhara MP5
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CHAPTER TWO

THE SECULAR HEALERS: HEALER AND SICKMAN

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The Amhara use a set of twenty-one, non-redundant names to categorize traditional practitioners of disease prophylaxis, diagnosis, and treatment. These names are listed in table 2. The most general term employed is "Habeša hakiym" ("Abyssinian healer"), and is used to designate traditional curers as a class by distinguishing them from practitioners working in Western techniques---European physicians, Ethiopian health officers, and local injectionists. The Habeša hakiyms can be sorted into three mutually exclusive categories, each defined analytically, according to shared professional titles.

Category 1. Physical manipulation of the sickman's person is dominant, and the employment of materia medica is either absent or subordinated to these physical manipulations. These healing powers are compatible with the fir[illegible]d second therapeutic strategies discussed in Chapter One. Any therapist of this category, with the exception of the awalaj (midwife), can be referred to as "wogeyša". The exclusion of the midwife is probably a sexual one, since practitioners known as wogeyša are almost invariably male, while the awalaj is always a woman. Operationally, healers of the first category are distinguished from one another by their different organ do-

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[TEXT CONTINUED ON PAGE 29]

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TABLE 2

AMHARA PRACTITIONER TITLES

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Practitioner Category		Practitioner Title	
3	Balazar	Awakiy	Tonkway
	Debtera-Ganel Gelaa		
	Debtera-Meshav Gelac (Tinish Debtera)		
	Atmakiy		
2	Medhaniyt Korad		Wogeyza[2]
	Yi_Medhaniyt Awakiy		
	Yi_Med. Korac / Yi_Med. Kabiy / Yi_Kitab Kitabiy		
	Yi_Medhaniyt Ateci		
	Yi_Medhaniyt Seci		
1	Tagañ	Wogeyza[1]	
	Ankar Korac		
	Yiters Medhaniyt Awlakiy		
	Awalaj		
	Agamiy		
	Tokwariy		

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*756 mains---bone and jimat, teeth and jaws, tonsils and
*759 uvula, womb and associated organs.

*192 Category 2. Therapeutic success relies on the use
*196 of medicaments; practitioners of this category utilize the third therapeutic strategy. Although no single term properly distinguishes these therapists from other categories of practitioners, they are, as a class, described by a common set of professional titles. Each title consists of three terms. The first indicates the name of the ailment for which the practitioner owns a therapy. Unlike other categories of practitioners, professional titles among these therapists are specific for single named ailments, rather than for a range of ailments. The second term is always the word "medhaniyt" ("medicament"). The maker of therapeutic amulets is the single exception to this (e.g., yidemaketir kitab kitabiy, "amulet maker for post-partum bleeding"). The final term indicates the format and "completeness" of the herbal therapy practiced. Thus, the "yianfula medhaniyt awakiy" is the "medicine expert for the ailment known as anfula".

[776] Category 3. Therapeutic success derives from the practitioner's intimacy with spirit beings (ganel, zar, or saint of the Church) and his familiarity with magic (asmat); he relies upon the fourth therapeutic strategy.
*[793] The term "tonkway" is sometimes used to denote the most prominant practitioners of this category, the debtera-

*192 *756 and balazar-healers, but semantically that term tends *759 to emphasize the practitioner's ability as a seer rather *192 than as a therapist. Moreover, the atmakiy (anneinter) • 196 is never referred to as "tonkway", even though his powers are also derived from supernaturals. When, in conversation, it is necessary to distinguish this category of practitioner (including the atmakiy) from the "secular healer" (categories 1 and 2), the title 'wogeyša' is extended to subsume all of the latter as a class.

Table three outlines the semantic distribution of Amhara practitioner titles.

*756 It is the intention of this chapter to describe *759 curerers of the first and second categories, from the [128] perspective of the technical requirements of their respective therapeutic strategies. The chapter also considers two additional healers, the cupper (agamiy) and the tattooist (tokwariy). Like the practitioners of the first and second categories, both are "secular" healers, since their therapeutic strategies and the sources of their curing powers clearly exclude them from the third practitioner category (i.e., healers with supernaturally [196] derived powers). However, neither cupper nor tattooist fits neatly, semantically or therapeutically, into one of the secular categories, but will be shown to share characteristics of both.